

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 and 9-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1-7, 9, 10, and 12-19 have been amended and claim 8 cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter found therein. In addition, the specification has been amended to correct minor informalities found therein.

The amendments to claims 2-6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18 and 19 are only to improve readability by inserting punctuation, removing redundant wording or to provide clearer language. None of these amendments change the scope of the claim to which they are applied and it is submitted that none are necessary to patentability. Further, claims 2, 4, 7, 13, 15, 16 and 17 include amendments to conform the language to that used in the independent claim from which they depend. With the exception of claims 4 and 15, these amendments resulted from the amendments made to claims 1 and 12.

In paragraph 1, on page 2 of the Office Action, the drawings were objected to under 35 U.S.C. §1.83(a) alleging that "a developer supplying unit", as found in claim 10, must be shown or the feature cancelled from the claims. The objection is respectfully traversed.

A developer supplying unit is clearly shown in the drawings. Specifically, a developing unit is defined as 30_ and, in particular, it includes a supply roller 34_. The supply roller 34_ is in contact with the image carrier, i.e., the developing roller 32_, thus a developing supply unit is clearly shown in the drawings. Further, this relationship is described in the specification on page 7, lines 4-6 and page 8, line 23, through page 9, line 10 and shown, at least, in Figures 2 and 3. As such, it is respectfully requested the objection be withdrawn.

In paragraph 2, on page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1 and 13 were objected to because of informalities. Specific language was identified as forming the basis for the objection. Both claims 1 and 13 have been amended in response to the objection. As to the

objection to claim 1, the operation is described, for example at page 16, line 19 through page 17, line 15 wherein the endless belt is configured to transfer the developer image formed on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers to form a color image. Not claimed, because it is not part of the image forming apparatus, is the piece of paper onto which the image is transferred. Thus, there is nothing confusing about the language as amended.

In paragraph 4, on page 3 of the Office Action, claims 1-6, 9-15 and 18-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Yoshikawa, JP 2001-142279 and in paragraph 6, on page 7 of the Office Action, claims 7, 8, 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshikawa in view of Omata et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,442,356 (Omata). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's claim 1 calls for an image forming apparatus, comprising an endless belt configured to be rotatably driven; a plurality of image carriers disposed in a moving direction of the endless belt; a plurality of charging units, a charging unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to uniformly charge a surface of an associated image carrier; a plurality of exposing units, each exposing unit configured to expose an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers charged by the associated charging unit to form an electrostatic latent image on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers; and a plurality of developing units, a developing unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to develop the electrostatic image on an associated image carrier with a developer of different color to form a developer image, wherein the endless belt is configured to transfer the developer image formed on each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers to form a color image, the developing unit provided at a most upstream position with respect to the moving direction of the image belt forms the developer image with a developer of black color, and the each developing unit is configured

to be separable from the associated image carrier and detachable from the image forming apparatus.

Applicant's claim 12 calls for an image forming apparatus, comprising an endless belt configured to be rotatably driven and to convey a recording medium; a plurality of image carriers disposed in a moving direction of the endless belt; a plurality of charging units, a charging unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to uniformly charge a surface of an associated image carrier; a plurality of exposing units, each exposing unit configured to expose an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers charged by the associated charging unit to form an electrostatic latent image on an associated image carrier of the plurality of image carriers; and a plurality of developing units, a developing unit provided for each image carrier of the plurality of image carriers and configured to develop the electrostatic image on an associated image carrier with a developer of different color to form a developer image, wherein each of the plurality of image carriers transfer the developer images onto the recording medium to form the color image, and the developing unit provided at a most upstream position with respect to the moving direction of the endless belt forms the developer image with a developer of black color.

With respect to claim 1, neither Yoshikawa nor Omata disclose a developing unit configured to be separable from an associated carrier and detachable from the image forming apparatus. In both of the applied references, the constructs that produce the image of each color, that is the image forming station P₋ of Omata and the image formation units U₋ of Yoshikawa are anything more than schematic drawings. There is no indication that they are removable from the image forming apparatus and there certainly is no indication that the developing units are configured to be separable from the associated image carrier. References can only be relied upon for what they teach. Neither of the references teach Applicant's claimed structure of claim 1. Thus, the rejection of claims 1-6 and 9-11 under 35 U.S.C.

§102 over Yoshikawa is inappropriate, and further Yoshikawa does not suggest the invention of the claims. Further, as neither reference suggests the subject matter of the invention of claim 1, their combination cannot suggest the subject matter of claim 1, as amended with the features of claim 8, and claim 7. It is respectfully requested the rejections applied to claims 1-6 and 9-11 and claim 7 (claim 8 being cancelled), respectively, be withdrawn.

As to claim 12, claim 12 calls for an endless belt. . . to convey a recording medium. In Yoshikawa, the endless belt is an intermediate transfer member and does not transport a recording medium. Rather, it conveys an image that is subsequently transferred to a recording medium at N₂.

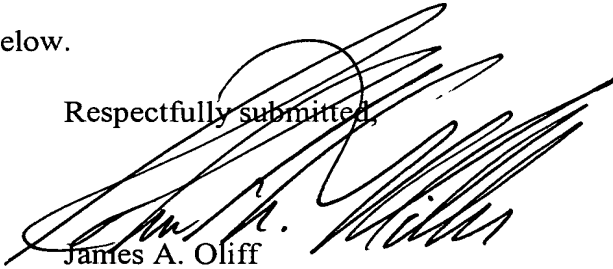
Thus, the rejection of claims 12-15 and 18-20 under 35 U.S.C. §102 is inappropriate and the rejection should be withdrawn.

As to Omata's alleged teaching of a charging unit 32, such is described as a "separation charger" which decays electrostatic attractive force (col. 4, lines 46-48). Therefore, it is not a charging unit as found in claim 16 and Omata does not suggest claim 17 for the same reasons discussed above with respect to claim 8 incorporated into claim 1.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-7 and 9-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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